

Draft Minutes

A meeting of the Senate Committee on Government Operations and Reform was held on Tuesday March 20, 2007 at 2:30 pm, in The Senate Hearing Room, first floor of the Boji Tower.

The meeting was called to order at 2:38 p.m.

Members Present: Senators Bishop, Patterson, Cassis, Kuipers, Schauer, Clarke, Olshove

Also Present: Senators Jansen, Sanborn

Senator Clarke entered the room at 2:55 p.m.

Senator Kuipers entered the room at 2:58 p.m.

Senator Bishop moved the adoption of the previous meeting's minutes. Senator Patterson seconded.

Yeas: Senators Bishop, Patterson, Cassis, Schauer, Olshove

Advice and Consent hearing on the Appointment of Keith Cooley to Director of the Department of Labor and Economic Growth.

Mr. Cooley gave the following opening statement:

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the committee:

It is an honor and a privilege to have been asked by Governor Granholm to serve as Director of the Department of Labor and Economic Growth. I look forward to working with you, the Governor and the legislature as we build our future in the Next Michigan.

Before I begin my comments, I would like to introduce Yvonne, my wife and partner (friend) of almost 30 years.

Unlike many appointees before me, I am not a career public servant. I have, however, heard the siren call of service to my community throughout my career.

What I am is an engineer, a strategist and a change agent with almost 40 years of corporate and not-for-profit history, nearly all of that right here in Michigan.

I have overseen the build of prototype nuclear reactors for Navy subs. I have instituted unique processes that helped a major Michigan-based car company win the Malcom Baldrige Quality Award. I led a large, not-for-profit thru successful ISO quality certification three times in as many years.

Though diverse, each of these accomplishments speaks to leadership, to management style, to determination, to excellence to quality and to success. Applying "real world" solutions to unique circumstances and unique situations is one tool we can all look to in "re-inventing" government. Each of us has a duty and a responsibility to our constituents and to our fellow citizens of Michigan to apply the lessons we've learned in the broad watercolor of life to the seemingly intractable problems.

I am an entrepreneur. I have started and run my own consulting company. As those entrepreneurs in the room know, this is where you truly define the phrase "intractable problem." Success in this arena is especially satisfying because of the level of self that is invested.

As important as all of that is, none of it defines who I am and what I bring to this position as well as my heritage. In many ways – I'm no different than the kids I grew up with on the south side of Pontiac, MI except for the blood that runs thru my veins... from both sides of my family. I come from parents and grandparents who understood the importance of education and the role that education in one generation plays in the advantage of the next. They taught me that education is a must. It is the great equalizer, something no one can take away from you.

My mother's father as a young man worked in a drug store in the early 1900's. He wanted to be a doctor, he wanted to help others. He decided somehow...that he would go to the University of Michigan and get his medical degree and practice medicine.

Problem was he had only a high school diploma, he had no money, and he lived in the Caribbean in a poor neighborhood of a poor country, Jamaica. That didn't stop him.

He made his way to the States with a forged college diploma, graduated Michigan Medical School in 1925 and practiced for 30 years in and around Atlantic City, N.J.

His oldest daughter, my mother graduated Michigan with a degree in Social Work... my aunts finished college also – one as a lawyer, the other in Psychiatry (U of Mich. again).

My mother met my dad at the University. His parents mopped floors, shined shoes, did house work to get him through school. He also went into medicine, graduating in 1945 after a series of events that led to his expulsion for exposing a Jim Crow restaurant on campus that would not serve Negroes.

His sister became a teacher, her husband, a civil engineer for MDOT.

My dad has been a selfless servant to his community serving as Oakland County Commissioner, Pontiac City Commissioner, opening a well baby clinic for poor mothers in the 50's and 60's, and meeting with Dr. Martin Luther King in the community's efforts around civil rights.

When his patients could pay him they did. Sometimes he was paid with vegetables, sometimes he didn't get paid at all but he never refused anyone his skills or his service. With such a legacy you can well imagine that it was an expectation in my family that I would study hard, work hard, do well and go to college –no if's and's or but's.

I am immensely proud of the efforts of my grandparents and parents to pull themselves, against the odds, up from humble and poor beginnings through education and determination. Those are two of the most important values imprinted on me. And, like many families who worked their way up the ladder, there has always been for me a profound sense of the necessity for helping those who need help the most.

But my debt to my family does not end there. The values they have instilled have guided me through each challenge and past every obstacle I have faced in my career. They represent the fundamental core of my approach to everything I do, from the time I spend with Yvonne to the late evenings strategizing over a workforce issue. As the Greek philosophers understood... our values are who we are.

- I believe in the value of each and every individual
- I believe in the importance of education
- I believe in the necessity for determination
- I believe in the utility of selflessness
- I believe in the requirement for community service
- I am dedicated to breaking barriers

In a world of global competition, continuous learning and continuous application of that knowledge to innovative products and processes is what stands between life as we know it and a fall from economic grace. That is not a future I want for my family, nor my community, nor my state.

With the strength of my conviction, my experience in corporate America with all of its complex interdependencies and with the values of my forebears, I choose a different future. And today, I recognize my responsibility in helping to create that future.

I am honored that the Governor has asked me to focus my energies on workforce development and deployment of 21st century workforce strategies. I will do that working collaboratively with MEDC President/CEO Jim Epolito, MSHDA President Michael DeVos and others as we partner to grow Michigan and implement Governor Granholm's economic plan.

I especially look forward to building a relationship with you, the members of this committee and with the legislature. Constituencies have been consistent in telling public servants to work together to solve problems, and I intend to be part of that solution.

I appreciate the opportunity to come before this commission and answer any questions you may have of me in this confirmation process.

Mr. Cooley took questions from each of the committee members.

Senator Kuipers moved that the Government Operations Committee favorably report the appointment of Keith Cooley as Director of the Department of Labor and Economic Growth to the Senate with a recommendation of advising and consenting to the appointment. Senator Clarke seconded.

Yeas: Senators Patterson, Cassis, Kuipers, Clarke, Olshove.

Nays: None

The motion prevailed

Senator Patterson adjourned the committee, the time being 4:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Committee Clerk

Chairperson

Date approved by Committee